

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00

XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /086 W

-----022605 012024Z /43

R 016136Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7922

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION USNATO

COMICEDEFOR

CINCLANT

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IC

SUBJECT: NATIONAL CONVENTION OF PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE

1. NATIONAL CONVENTION OF FAR-LEFTIST PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE (PA) HELD IN REYKJAVIK NOVEMBER 17-20. REPRESENTATIVES OF THREE-FOURTHS OF ALL PA GROUPS IN ICELAND ATTENDED FOR PURPOSE OF ELECTING NEW CHAIRMAN AND DETERMINING POLICY IN PREPARATION FOR NATIONAL ELECTIONS NEXT SPRING. MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF CONFERENCE WAS THAT IT LEFT DOOR OPEN FOR POSSIBLE COOPERATION WITH INDEPENDENCE PARTY IN NEXT GOVERNMENT.

2. THEN-CHAIRMAN RAGNAR ARNALS OPENED MEETING WITH ADDRESS THAT PUT EMPHASIS ON LABOR AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. HE NOTED THAT IF PA WERE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN NEXT GOVERNMENT, IT WOULD BASE ITS COOPERATION ON FOLLOWING: CHANGES IN ECONOMIC AND LABOR POLICIES; BANKING, PENSION AND EDUCATIONAL REFORMS; ENERGY POLICY; IMPROVED BENEFITS FOR

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WORKERS; BETTER SOCIAL SERVICES; AND FOREIGN POLICY INDEPENDENT OF FOREIGN MILITARY POWERS. ENTIRE DEFENSE/SECURITY/FOREIGN POLICY ASPECTS OF KEYNOTE WERE GIVEN UNUSUALLY LITTLE ATTENTION, AND OTHER THAN PRO FORMA DENUNCIATION OF ICELANDIC DEFENSE FORCE (IDF), PA CONVENTION HEARD LITTLE OF THE USUAL RHETORIC ALLING FOR WITHDRAWAL OF IDF.

3. FOR WEEKS PRIOR TO CONVENTION, THERE HAD BEEN SPECULATION ABOUT WHO WOULD BECOME NEW CHAIRMAN SINCE ARNALDS, HAVING ALREADY SERVED THREE TERMS, WAS UNABLE TO SUCCEED HIMSELF. ALL LEADING CANDIDATES FOR JOB, INCLUDING LUDVIK JOSEFSSON WHO WAS ULTIMATELY CHOSEN CHAIRMAN, HAD DECLARED THAT THEY DID NOT WANT POSITION. IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS THAT PARTY BYLAWS BE CHANGED ALLOWING ARNALDS TO BE REELECTED, PA LEADERS FELT THIS WOULD MAKE PARTY APPEAR "UNDEMOCRATIC," THERE WAS NO OPPOSITION TO JOSEFSSON'S ELECTION AS CHAIRMAN, AND KJARTAN OLAFSSON, EDITOR OF PA DAILY THJODVILJINN, WAS ELECTED VICE CHAIRMAN. (LIST OF PA CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT).

4. JOSEFSSON CRITICIZED GOVERNMENT FOR INFLATION POLICY AND SAID PA WOULD INSTITUTE NEW APPROACH BASED ON COOPERATING WITH LABOR TO COUNTERACT INFLATION AND ON STRENGTHENING BASIC INDUSTRIES TO INCREASE PRODUCTION. IN ADDITION, JOSEFSSON CALLED FOR REDUCTION IN BUREAUCRACY AND REORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES. NEW CHAIRMAN CALLED PA "UNITING POWER TO THE LEFT IN ICELANDIC POLITICS" BUT UNLIKE IN PREVIOUS CONVENTIONS, NO ONE HERE REFERRED TO PA AS SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHOSE OBJECTIVES SHOULD BE TO SUPPLANT EXISTING SDP.

5. ONE REPRESENTATIVE PROPOSED THAT PA DECLARE IT WOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT PARTICIPATE IN NEXT GOVERNMENT WITHOUT PRIOR COALITION AGREEMENT TO SEEK WITHDRAWAL OF IDF FROM COUNTRY. LEADERSHIP CLEARLY DID NOT WANT TO GO ON RECORD WITH SUCH A STATEMENT AND KILLED MEASURE.

6. COMMENT: CONVENTION POINTS OUT TWO NOTEWORTHY DEVELOPMENTS. FIRST, THERE SEEMS TO BE LEADERSHIP GAP IN PA AT PRESENT AS EVIDENCED BY FACT THAT NO ONE WANTED TO TAKE OVER CHAIRMANSHIP. ARNALDS, AT 39, REPRESENTED NEW GENERATION OF PA BUT WAS UNABLE TO WIELD POWER WHICH REMAINED IN HANDS OF MEMBERS OF OLDER GENERATION SUCH AS JOSEFSSON, 63, THEN-CHAIRMAN OF PA ALTHING FACTION. ARNALDS YOUTHFUL IMAGE HELPED ATTRACT YOUNG VOTERS, SOMETHING JOSEFSSON WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DO. TWO MEN HAVE NOW SWITCHED JOBS, AND RESULT IS LIKELY TO BE THAT JOSEFSSON WILL CONTINUE TO DOMINATE BOTH ALTHING FACTION AND PARTY AS WHOLE AS HE DID BEFORE. IT MAY BE OLAFSSON, HOWEVER, WHO IS BEING GROOMED FOR A FUTURE STARRING ROLE IN PARTY. REGARDED AS CLEVER AND INFLUENTIAL WITHIN PA, OLAFSSON MAY BE ABLE TO END PECULIAR SITUATION WHEREIN PA HAS OCCASIONALLY TAKEN HARDER LINE THAN ITS OFFICIAL PRESS ORGAN.

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7. SECOND, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT PA GAVE SUCH SHORT
SHRIFT TO IDF ISSUE. IDF WAS DOWNPLAYED THROUGHOUT
CONVENTION, AND EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON PARTY'S CONCERN
ABOUT ECONOMIC SITUATION. PA IS HUNGRY TO GET BACK
INTO OFFICE, AND IT WANTS TO FORECLOSE NO OPTIONS.
ALTHOUGH JOSEFSSON SAID PROBABILITY OF COALITION WITH
INDEPENDENCE WAS SLIM, CONVENTION AVOIDED SHARP
ATTACKS ON IP AND ISSUES DEAR TO HEARTS OF IP MEMBERS.
PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE WENT OUT OF ITS WAY TO SHOW THAT ODD
COUPLE MATCH BETWEEN PA AND IP SHOULD NOT BE RULED OUT.

8. DECONTROL NOVEMBER 1, 1978.
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Sent Date: 01-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
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